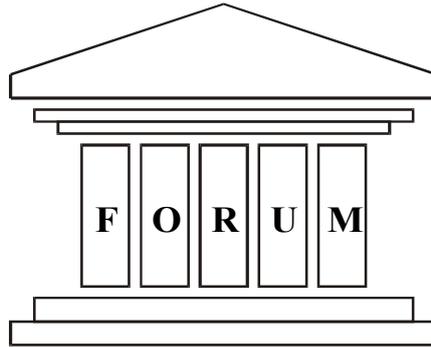


# MERTON PARK WARD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



Spring 2014

Issue No 50

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**LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN** Welcome to our 50<sup>th</sup> issue of FORUM. MPWRA has been keeping residents informed about local matters since 1989 and working for 25 years to support you through our Independent councillors. In this issue we highlight some of what they have achieved over the last four years.

Local Elections are coming up on 22 May. At our **Special General Meeting** you can hear from the three candidates whom we wish to adopt to stand for Merton Park Ward. The SGM will be held at **Poplar Primary School at 7.30pm on 1 April**. All paid up members are allowed to vote. To join or renew your membership, fill in the enclosed membership form, visit our website [www.mertonpark.org.uk](http://www.mertonpark.org.uk) or email [membership@mertonpark.org.uk](mailto:membership@mertonpark.org.uk)

After the SGM, at 8pm, there will be a talk on **Waste Management in Merton** a subject on which many of you have strong opinions!

In the meantime, enjoy the fine spring days in our beautiful area. We look forward to seeing you at our meetings where you can meet your councillors and other residents. But if you can't attend a meeting then do visit our website and let us have your comments and ideas via email.

**Harold Forbes, Chairman**

Do you value your local community? Do you find this FORUM newsletter useful? Do you enjoy catching up on local issues which affect you? Do you appreciate being able to contact your councillors directly when you have a problem they might be able to help you with? If you do, then please

## Support us by joining us – a membership form is enclosed

We receive no other financial support and although as volunteers we give our time freely, there are some costs we can't avoid. Membership fees cover the cost of printing FORUM, holding our monthly meetings and fighting local elections.

**Merton Park Ward Residents' Association (MPWRA) sponsors three Independent councillors who form Merton Park Ward Independent Residents (MPWIR) on Merton Council**

**Karin Forbes** ([karin.forbes@merton.gov.uk](mailto:karin.forbes@merton.gov.uk)) – 58 Mostyn Road SW19 3LN – 020 8540 3314

**John Sargeant** ([john.sargeant@merton.gov.uk](mailto:john.sargeant@merton.gov.uk)) – 2 Langley Road SW19 3NZ – 020 8542 9361

**Peter Southgate** ([peter.southgate@merton.gov.uk](mailto:peter.southgate@merton.gov.uk)) – 22 Dorset Road SW19 3HA – 020 8542 2053

[www.mertonpark.org.uk](http://www.mertonpark.org.uk)

## NELSON HOSPITAL and McCARTHY & STONE CARE HOME

The **Local Care Centre** in the Kingston Road is on track for completion in early 2015. With building well advanced, structural steels were recently erected to rebuild the pitched roofs of the pavilions. Internal walls and partitions have been installed and electrical work was in hand during Councillor John Sargeant's recent site visit. It was also clear that the memorial stones are covered and protected within the original brick facades.

Your councillors continue to monitor the developments closely. The latest NHS construction newsletter can be viewed on our website. Please raise any queries or concerns on the building work on 0800 292 2312.

\*\*\*\*\*

The adjacent **McCarthy & Stone Care Home** was also granted planning permission in September 2012. Opposing the plans at the time, MPWRA said that the Care Home would be *a poor addition to the area, looming and oppressive* and that *the style of the building is incongruent to the area*. Since then we have argued for modifications and some minor changes have been made.



When permission was granted we requested that the external building materials be brought to the Planning Committee for approval. There have been protracted discussions and the cladding for the top floor has proved contentious. M&S have been asked to consider other wall treatments including a 'living wall'. These are due to be considered by the Committee as we go to press.

JS

## CCTV AT DORSET ROAD/KINGSTON ROAD JUNCTION

In March 2012 we received a torrent of protests from motorists who had been issued with penalties for stopping in the **box junction** while turning right out of **Dorset Road** onto the **Kingston Road**. What was particularly unfair was the use of unmarked vans fitted with CCTV units to catch unwary motorists. In our view this amounted to **entrapment** for the purpose of generating PCN revenues, not legitimate enforcement.

Users will know it is impossible to turn right out of Dorset Road without stopping in the box junction on Kingston Road, so we met with the Head of Parking Services to press for a more sensible approach to enforcement. Since then we have not received any complaints about PCNs being issued at this junction.

PS

## SPEEDING AND 20 MPH LIMITS



Your Independent councillors have been pursuing improved safety measures and traffic calming with Merton Council and the police. The problems were emphasised by the accident in **Mostyn Road** late last

year. Their call for a radar sign was turned down on financial grounds but they have been promised a proper analysis of speeds in Mostyn Road.

They have been pressing Merton to honour its undertaking, in 2012, to provide data to assess properly where 20mph zones can be effective. They are also pushing for a thorough review of traffic calming measures to understand how effective they are. 'Speed cushions' sometimes seem to provide no deterrent to speeding at all. Evidence also shows that simply creating 20mph zones doesn't in itself improve road safety.

Your councillors are also continuing to press for the north end of **Cannon Hill Lane** to be made 20mph. Although this stretch of road had the most accidents in Merton Park ward, it was left out of the zone introduced four years ago.

JS

## MORDEN TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

In our last edition of FORUM we told you about council plans for Morden Town Centre. They promised not only to transform the town centre but also to have a significant impact on nearby households. The Council's consultation on the Draft Planning Brief was frankly not an easy read. So we invited you to complete **our own survey** and have your say whilst the ground rules for the project were still up for discussion. Thanks to your responses the Council have taken on board several of your concerns. The Planning Brief adopted by Merton's Cabinet in mid-March contained several amendments from the original brief.

Residents had many concerns, chiefly about the height of buildings close to existing dwellings, especially near **Daybrook Road, Kenley Road, Windermere Avenue** and **Kendor Gardens**. They wanted commercial development to be concentrated close to the town centre with a wide variety of retail outlets. Fewer than 20% felt the **London Road** end of the site should rise above 6 storeys. Several people raised the importance of adequate parking and the need to avoid a strain on local services.

The Brief now takes account of these and many other issues you raised but:

- It's a Brief, not a plan. It will now be presented to developers to generate interest in the potential for the site. The whole process to completion will be a long one; planning applications are not expected until later in 2015.
- The Brief leaves open the possibility of some tall buildings in the town centre, although the heights are not specified.
- It says that parking provision must comply with the London Plan, i.e. it should 'promote the use of sustainable modes of transport'.

This is the biggest single development our ward has ever seen. You can be sure your Independent ward councillors will continue to follow it very closely. You can read the Brief on our website under 'Local Issues' [www.mertonpark.org.uk](http://www.mertonpark.org.uk)

JS

## PLANNING

Planning controversies are never far away in Merton Park, because our residents value their green and leafy environment and want to protect it from insensitive development. We are fully behind them in this objective and have worked consistently to safeguard the features that make Merton Park the best place to live in Merton.

To help new home owners moving into our **conservation areas** (John Innes Merton Park, Merton Hall Road and Wimbledon Chase) we worked with the Planning Department to produce a guide to appropriate design modifications when upgrading their homes. We continue to oppose planning applications that fail to respect the special character of Merton Park, notably applications to build a house in the rear garden of **116 Kenley Road**, to demolish the bungalow at **30 Dorset Road** and replace it with a block of four flats, and to

expand **21 Mostyn Road** into a four storey block of flats. To date, none of these applications has succeeded on appeal.

Despite MPWIR winning cross-party support in Council for Merton to retain control over **Permitted Development Rights (PDR)**, these were doubled by central government in 2012 from 3m to 6m for terraced and semi-detached properties and from 4m to 8m for detached properties – that's a lot of rear garden space! But in an important government concession, neighbours were allowed to object to PDR applications, effectively bringing them back under planning control. We know from our survey this is what 82% of Merton Park residents wanted.

PS

## BUDGET KEY POINTS

Merton Council is legally bound to set a balanced budget each year, and for the past eight years MPWIR has shouldered the responsibility for ensuring it does. That's because neither the minority Tory administration (2006-10) nor the present minority Labour administration (2010-14) could get their budgets through without our support. But that doesn't mean we have given uncritical approval to everything that has been proposed. We are acutely conscious that funding from central government has been reduced by £70m, and the savings are more difficult to find each year.

So we vetoed Labour's proposal to give £100 back to every council tax payer in 2010 by running down reserves. Likewise, we voted against Conservative proposals to reduce council tax by 2 ½ % (equating to £27 for a Band D property) in the budget for 2014/15. Knowing that we have savings of nearly £16 million to find from 2016 onwards, we saw both proposals as irresponsible and reckless. We believe our residents want a prudent and realistic approach to their finances when they entrust us to make budget decisions on their behalf.

PS

## WIMBLEDON HOUSE



Wimbledon House School lay vacant for a very long time and was twice occupied by squatters. Following the second occupation we worked with Merton Council to ensure the premises were properly secured. We urged them to market the property actively, ensuring the Council maximised the value of the site. This resulted in Casterbridge Nurseries (now Bright Horizons) acquiring the site for a pre-school nursery, which opened in 2013 following extensive refurbishment. Councillor John Sargeant officially opened the nursery in his capacity as Deputy Mayor, (ably supported by Peppa Pig) bringing this long running saga to a happy conclusion. **KF**

## EXPANSION OF SCHOOLS

The increase in population across London has put massive pressure on primary school places and Merton is no exception to this. Since 2006 the number of children needing primary school places in Merton has increased by an astonishing 40%, requiring 21 extra forms of entry (FE) at reception level. These have been accommodated by expanding schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, including **Wimbledon Chase, Joseph Hood, Poplar** and **Hillcross**. By doing this Merton has been able to offer every child in the borough a school place and last year 81% of parents were offered their first choice of school, well above the average for London.

As these children grow up the pressure will transfer to secondary schools, with extra places needed from 2016. **Rutlish School's** governing body (of which Councillor Karin Forbes is a member) was asked to consider expanding from the current 8 FE to 10 FE. The governing body unanimously rejected the proposal as they felt it hadn't been fully thought through in terms of facilities such as the canteen and main school hall, the impact on the local environment and the planned increase in the size of the sixth form. As councillors we very much support the governing body's stance on this and will continue to work closely with the school and the Council to achieve the optimum solution. **KF**

## WIMBLEDON CHASE

Way back in 2009 a very packed local meeting discussed the regeneration of the **Wimbledon Chase** area. This galvanised Merton Council into action and new trees were planted, new benches were installed, raised flower beds were introduced along with extra litter bins, cycle stands and new paving. After much lobbying, particularly from Ian Smith, Network Rail was finally persuaded to re-paint the railway bridge, which has hugely improved the appearance of the area.

It was important to attract tenants for the new developments along the north side of the **Kingston Road**. In order to create a loading bay to service this parade of shops and make the units more attractive, we persuaded the Council to consult on moving the bus stop. This has ensured that the sites have not remained vacant. **KF**

## FREE PARKING

In the 2013 consultation on parking at local shopping parades in Merton, the **Merton Rush** area received a very high number of responses backing our long-standing demand for 20 minutes free parking. Merton has accepted that this should be introduced. However, we are told there has to be a further consultation at the end of March specifically on free parking all along the Kingston Road, from South Wimbledon to Wimbledon Chase. We are pushing hard for an early implementation, as we believe it will really benefit our local businesses. **KF**

## JOHN INNES FOOTPATH

Although not a Public Right of Way, the footpath that connects **John Innes Park with John Innes Recreation Ground** has been well used by generations of residents. But the expansion of **Rutlish School** from its original site on Watery Lane to the playing fields on the other side of the path created a security problem for the school. In order to ensure the safety of pupils and staff crossing from one site to the other, the school proposed to close the path in 2010. This caused an outcry from many who rely on the path on a daily basis for example, people going to and from work, mothers taking toddlers to play in the park and members of Merton Park Bowls and Croquet Clubs.

After an extensive public consultation to which 412 people responded, it was agreed the path should remain open. But to secure the school site in the event of an emergency, an additional gate was installed at the western end (John Innes Rec) of the path, allowing the path to be sealed off if staff or pupils were threatened. We fully supported this as a sensible solution that safeguarded the path for residents to use while protecting the school against exceptional threat. To date the gates have never been closed. **PS**

## MORDEN LEISURE CONSULTATION

The swimming pool at Morden Park was built in the 1960s and has become too expensive to maintain. Merton Council has taken advice from Sport England on developing a brand new family leisure centre to replace the pools that is 'high spec' but also best value for money. Their proposal would cost £8.4m. The Council has a budget of £10m and is keen to find out what extra facilities residents would like to see.

The consultation is being run independently by community engagement specialist, PPS Group and includes public exhibitions as well as the online opportunity to have your say. The final public exhibition will be at Morden Park pools 29 March 9.00-15.00. You can also participate online at [www.leisureformorden.com](http://www.leisureformorden.com)

The consultation ends on 4 April.

KF

**POSTAL VOTE?** Remember that if you want to vote by post in the **Local and European elections on 22 May** you need to apply by 5pm on **7 May**.

Go to [www.merton.gov.uk/council/voting/howtovote.htm](http://www.merton.gov.uk/council/voting/howtovote.htm) where you can download a Postal Vote Application form.

## THAMESLINK AT BLACKFRIARS

We are proud to have taken an active part in the campaign against plans to terminate all Thameslink Wimbledon loop line trains at Blackfriars station, as part of the upgrade. Together with other residents' groups, MPWRA objected to travellers from Merton losing their direct service to: Farringdon (for Crossrail); St. Pancras (for Eurostar) and stations to St Albans and Luton Airport. **The government has instructed Network Rail to ensure Wimbledon's Thameslink rail service is preserved intact.**

JS

## MERTON PARK ACCESS TRACKS

The curious saga of **Michael Morrison's Merton Park Tracks** first began in 2010 when residents in **Kenley, Cranleigh** and **Tybenham** Roads received an anonymous letter offering to sell them the access tracks that serve the rear of their properties. We checked with Trading Standards and found this was **not** a scam; the tracks were indeed privately owned and could be offered for sale. But we also established that each property has right of way over the access tracks recorded with the Land Registry, and this right of way is unaffected by ownership of the access tracks. 27 tracks have now been offered for sale again, most recently in the local *Guardian* newspaper but to the best of our knowledge none have changed hands. As councillors we cannot offer legal advice and anyone considering purchase should consult a solicitor. Ownership of the tracks brings liabilities as well as benefits, and any owner is bound to respect the rights of way held by each property.

PS

## WHAT YOU'VE BEEN TELLING US

We always like to listen to our residents and over the past four years we have conducted several in-depth surveys. Unlike simple petitions, our surveys show not just whether residents are in favour of or against a scheme; they also tell us why because we give them the space to make other comments. This gives our councillors a strong platform from which to represent your views in council. For example:

- Over 200 responses told us how you felt about **wheelie bins** throughout the borough; a strong majority were not in favour and you gave us plenty of reasons why.
- 652 residents responded to our survey on the Council's proposal in 2011 to **extend operation of CPZ's** in Merton Park and elsewhere to Saturdays. Nearly 90% opposed the idea and the proposal was subsequently dropped.
- Over 90 people completed our survey on the Coalition Government's proposals to increase the size of Permitted Development Rights for **house extensions**. Your responses were strongly against and your comments led us to call for legal powers to exempt Merton from the revised rules. Several replies stressed the potential strain on relations between neighbours, so the government's concession to allow neighbours to object was a welcome victory, even though the exemption was not granted.
- Your thoughtful responses to the possibility of **webcasting** some council meetings enabled our councillors to design and steer a pilot scheme through council that has proved both cost-effective and useful. The scheme will continue only as long as viewing figures support it.
- Perhaps most importantly, our survey on plans for the redevelopment of **Morden Town Centre** and the area stretching into our ward has resulted in significant and vital changes to the Planning Brief which has just been accepted by Merton's cabinet.

JS

## DOG FOULING

The sunshine and longer evenings may tempt you out for a walk in one of our fine parks or simply for a stroll around our beautiful tree-lined streets. But if they do, be careful where you tread for we appear to be suffering from some irresponsible dog owners failing to clear up their pets' mess.

It is against the law to allow your dog to foul the pavement or other land that is open to the air in a public place. **Dog's mess is not only anti-social, it can also cause blindness in children. Failure to clean up can lead to prosecution and a fine of up to £1,000.** There really is no excuse for not doing so as the council provides dog litter bins for the proper disposal of dog waste.

If you see someone failing to clean up after their dog, you can report it to the Council for them to follow up. Note down as many details as possible: the date and time of the incident; the precise location; a description of dog and person; the identity of the person and their address (if known).

Sign and date your written record and contact the Council:

By phone: 020 8545 4118

By post: Enforcement, London Borough of Merton, PO Box 82, Morden, SM4 9WA

Online: [www.merton.gov.uk/transport-streets/street-care-cleaning/dogfouling](http://www.merton.gov.uk/transport-streets/street-care-cleaning/dogfouling)

HF

## MPWRA MEETINGS - ALL WELCOME

Meetings are at **8pm** at **MERTON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL (Note change of venue on 1 April)**

Entrance from Erridge Road Playground Gate

Each meeting includes time for questions to your Ward Councillors

**1 April** **POPLAR PRIMARY SCHOOL at 7.30pm Special General Meeting** where we will adopt our three candidates for Merton Park Ward to stand in the Local Elections on May 22. All paid up members are allowed to vote. To join or renew your membership fill in the enclosed membership form, visit [www.mertonpark.org.uk](http://www.mertonpark.org.uk) or email [membership@mertonpark.org.uk](mailto:membership@mertonpark.org.uk)

**Followed at 8pm by**

*Waste Management in Merton* - Cormac Stokes, Environment and Regeneration, LBM

**6 May** *Councillors' Question Time*

**3 June** *Creative Arts in Merton* - Asheq Akhtar, Arts Development Officer, Leisure and Culture, LBM

**1 July** **Annual General Meeting** and  
*Leisure services in Merton* - Chris Parsloe, LBM  
Guardian Newspaper Public Servant of the Year

**AUGUST** **NO MEETING**

### MPWRA Officers

Chairman: Harold Forbes 020 8540 3314  
Vice Chairman: Edward Foley 020 8946 2930  
Secretary: Christine Stutt 020 8543 6843  
Treasurer: Fred Rayner

[www.mertonpark.org.uk](http://www.mertonpark.org.uk)

### MPWRA Committee

Janet Broadmore  
Desé Child  
Hubert Child  
Philippa Foskett  
Graham Clark  
Ian Garbett  
Jolanta Nowak  
Pauline Southgate  
Judy Sargeant  
David Slocombe